3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

562 was her home. She made such a pretty picture as she smiled to us in greeting that I took out my camera and snapped her, saying as I did so "*Qurqmaselar.*" ("Don't be afraid"), for I was accustomed to the shyness of the women of the plains which renders a natural (i.e. unposed) photograph of them so difficult to obtain. To our surprise she tossed her head and said "I'm not afraid of men!" and then and there she chatted pleasantly to us for a few minutes, holding the lamb in her arms all the while, asking us all about ourselves and gossiping about Merket and the Amban's visit. On another occasion we noticed a Dulani woman digging in a field of heavy clay with great energy, while her husband strolled along behind the plough-bullocks close by. As for the town, the men there seem to leave everything to the fair sex, and a picture comes to my mind of a blacksmith's forge with a woman toiling away at the bellows with one hand and holding a horse-shoe in the fire with the other, while her husband and two other loafers sat by looking on. It was an astonishing sight, every time we issued from our Chinese rest-house just outside the bazaar, to see rows and rows, not of women and children as at Keriya but of full-grown men lining the railings waiting for us to come out; I counted seventy-two of them on one occasion, and hardly a single woman.

181 The standard of living as well as of morals among the Dulanis is noticeably lower than among the Turkis; thieving is rife, witness the watch-dogs which seem to average about three per house. They are also an exceedingly quarrelsome and vindictive race, in contrast to the easy-going, good-natured Turki. A Dulani will do anything to hurt an enemy. It is 627 a regular thing for one who has a quarrel with another to •682 threaten to kill his child or himself "at" his enemy, i.e. in order to bring bad luck on him, and sometimes he does it, too. The extraordinary thing is that the Chinese recognize the custom, and usually give judgment against the party "at" whom the child-murder or suicide was committed! They argue that the person who committed suicide or killed his child must have been seriously wronged, otherwise he would not have taken so dreadful a step. In a case I heard with the Amban of Maralbashi one of the main issues, argued at great length, was whether the plaintiff, who had attempted to kill himself by swallowing an over-dose of opium, had done so "at" the defendant, or, as the latter maintained, "at" a third party.

600 During our stay at Merket an important "international"

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

Valley and over the Achiq Davan to Khanterek on the Qaratash. Brian O'Flynn and his camels were not available this time, but Zakir Haji, the carrier whom we had employed on our spring tour, had served us very well in the mountains, and we were glad to be able to secure him and his ten ponies once more. Our retinue included the same well-tried orderlies and servants who had accompanied us the previous autumn, except that the ex-Lancer Rahim Khan, who was really past his work, was replaced by our sturdy, wise old Ladakhi Jemadar, Ghulam Muhammad. Another notable addition to our caravan was the fine grey donkey we had acquired in the spring for the sweeper Yakub to ride, in order to save the hire of a special pony for him. Tooty (short for Tutankhamen) cost us the equivalent of 25*s.* 6*d.* at the Thursday live-stock market outside Kashgar, which we visited in person to buy him, and he carried Yakub right staunchly over hill and dale throughout all our subsequent wanderings. D. regarded him as one of her pets, and if on the march he led laborious days, at the Consulate between tours he lived on the fat of the land. He had one drawback, and that was a frequent and most stentorian bray. Echoing among the precipices of the mountains, Tooty's bray would have awakened the Seven Sleepers, and every night we had to see that he was tied up with plenty of lucerne at least a quarter of a mile from our tents.

On the afternoon of the 19th June we rode to Yapchan, and next day we lunched at Yangi Hissar. My presence at this town, which is some miles to the east of the mouth of the Qaratash, was required for the joint trial with the Amban of an interesting murder case in which a Kirghiz of the Qizil Tagh was accused of killing a Chitrali traveller. The murdered man being a British and the accused a Chinese subject, the case was a " mixed " one triable by the Chinese authorities, with myself as British Consul-General " watching " it on behalf of the Government of India and the murdered man's relations.[1] The details of the case are not without dramatic interest and are worthy of record.

In February 1923 I received a letter from the Assistant Political Agent in Chitral, in the North-West Frontier Province of India, enclosing a petition from the relations of one Muham-

[1] If the nationalities had been reversed, with the accused a British and the deceased a Chinese subject, I would have tried the case at Kashgar in my Consular court with the Taoyin watching it on behalf of the Governor.

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

692 .682 mad Shah. This was to the effect that the said Muhammad Shah, a trader of Chitral, had left Yangi Hissar in the province of Sinkiang in the previous December but had never reached his home. I requested the Taoyin to make inquiries, at the same time calling for a report from the British Aqsaqal at Yangi Hissar. The latter replied that Muhammad Shah had indeed left Yangi Hissar two months before, travelling alone, and had been traced as far as Ighiz Yar on the Tashqurghan road, but had not been seen or heard of since. Nothing happened and I had almost given up hope of the mystery being cleared up, when towards the end of May the Taoyin informed me that a man had been arrested on the charge of murdering Muhammad Shah at a wild spot called Sasik Tika in the Qizil Tagh two marches from Yangi Hissar along the Tashqurghan road, and that in due course he would be tried by the Magistrate of Yangi Hissar, Mr. Chiang.

According to Chinese judicial procedure, the Magistrate of a district in which a murder has been committed is held responsible for this breach of law and order, and incurs a degree of disgrace inversely proportionate to the distance from his headquarters of the place where the crime was committed. He must proceed at once to the spot and view the corpse, no matter where it is or how long it has been buried, and hold an inquest in person. The result is that corpulent Mandarins, who never stir from their Yamens if they can possibly help it, take the greatest care that no murder be committed within their borders, not only because of the black marks they receive, but also on account of the irksome journey that may be involved. As has happened more than once of recent years in Kashgaria, when a murder takes place near the boundary between two districts, the Beg and local headmen know what is expected of them and take good care that the body is not found within *their* master's jurisdiction. The people in the next district feel the same about it, and thus the unfortunate corpse is bandied surreptitiously backwards and forwards until its relatives succeed in inducing one set of authorities or the other to take up the case. The system has at any rate the advantage of keeping down violent crime, which is liable to cause so much trouble to everybody concerned, from the District Magistrate downwards; and certainly during the two and a quarter years I was at Kashgar, out of all the hundreds of British Indian traders and other nationals travelling about the country with goods or money or living on

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

their estates, only one was murdered. That was Muhammad Shah, the victim in the present case. 692 682

Poor Mr. Chiang did not at all like having to drive and ride forty miles up into the mountains to hold an inquest upon the four-month-old corpse of the Chitrali, but he did it, and one of my Assistant Aqsaqals accompanied him. As a result of the inquest a Kirghiz of Sasik Tika was charged with the murder and the case referred to the Taoyin of Kashgar for orders. I was informed, as already stated, and it was arranged between myself and the Taoyin, in order to save the delay and expense involved in bringing the case to Kashgar for trial, that I should visit Yangi Hissar on my way to the mountains and assist at the hearing of the case by the Magistrate. The trial, which took place on the morning after our arrival (21st June), was short, as the accused had confessed and it was only necessary to examine, besides the man himself, the Beg of the circle and the *yuzbashi* (headman) of the valley. The prisoner, a man of about 30, was of an unmistakably criminal type with low, receding forehead, eyes set close together, and a violent squint. The story he and the witnesses told Mr. Chiang and myself, as we sat at a huge table in the open inner courtyard of the Yamen, was as follows:

Muhammad Shah was an opium-smuggler and had sold a consignment of Afghan opium profitably in Yarkand the previous autumn. Early in December, that is to say about as late in the season as he could reasonably expect to cross the high passes safely, he started alone from Yangi Hissar for his home in far Chitral across the Roof of the World. He rode a wiry little Yarkand pony, and in his sadlle-bags he carried the balance of his profits in the shape of a few taels' worth of silver and a couple of bales of gaily-dyed Khotan silks; for the greater part of the proceeds of his opium-running had doubtless been spent in the oiling of necessary palms and in obtaining from the Yamen a permit to leave the country.

On the evening of his second day on the road Muhammad Shah found himself at Sasik Tika and asked for shelter at the solitary hut occupied by the prisoner, Yakub. The Kirghiz came out and looked at the traveller and his bulging saddle-bags. "We are the poorest of the poor," he said, "and have no food, but we will put you up for the night. Only, you must sleep outside the tent as my wife and three children are all ill inside." Accordingly Muhammad Shah, having hobbled his pony and muttered Mecca-wards his evening prayer, ate two

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of the little round shiny loaves he had brought with him and threw himself down on the felt mat which his host spread in front of the tent for him. For pillow he had his saddlebags and for bedclothes his sheepskin cloak, and he was soon fast asleep in spite of the icy breath of night which now and again passed down the gloomy valley like a sigh.

Two hours later, when the moon had set, Yakub crept out of the hut and peered stealthily at his guest in the faint starlight. Then he went to a heap of stones close by and selected a big slab which he could just carry shoulder-high. Staggering with it to where Muhammad Shah lay, he heaved it on the unfortunate sleeper's head. As Yakub himself put it: "He just gave a little kick and moved no more." Dragging the body on the felt mat as it lay, he hid it behind a boulder and went back to bed. Early in the morning he rose and went out, telling his wife (who knew nothing of what he had done) that he was going to work at the coal-mine.[1] Going to where the body lay he wrapped it up in the felt and heaved it first on to a boulder and thence on to the back of the dead man's pony, which he proceeded to drive in front of him up a steep and narrow side-glen into the snowy fastnesses of the Qizil Tagh. Up and up he went, to the verge of the winter snows, and there he threw the corpse down into the dry bed of the torrent and buried it by tumbling rocks on it from above. He would have liked to keep the pony, but it would have been too dangerous; so he tied the poor beast's legs together and pushed it over a precipice. The dead man's money he hid in a secret place and the silks he stored in the hut, telling his wife that he had received them from a trader in exchange for the skins of some stone-martens he had trapped.

Weeks passed and nothing happened, so that gradually Yakub plucked up courage to go to Yangi Hissar on market day and spend some of his new fortune. A wedding took place in a neighbouring valley to which he and his wife, with all the other Kirghiz of the Qizil Tagh, were invited; every one noticed the beautiful new silk clothes of Mrs. Yakub, and word went round that her husband had somehow become rich. Then one day the inhabitants of the Kinkol valley received an unexpected and unwelcome visit from their Beg, who brought grave news from Yangi Hissar. The British Consul-General, it appeared,

[1] A shallow surface-working on a seam recently discovered in the neighbourhood and exploited by the Chinese military authorities, who claim a monopoly of all minerals.

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

had formally requested the Taoyin, and through him their Magistrate, to make inquiries into the whereabouts of a British subject last heard of in Yangi Hissar district. This meant that unless they, the Beg, headmen and people of the Kinkol valley, could either find the fellow or prove that he had crossed the passes into Tashkurghan district, unpleasant things would happen to them.

It was not long before the suspicions of the headmen fell upon our friend Yakub. The latter at first strenuously denied all knowledge of the missing man; but he failed to explain how he had become so wealthy all of a sudden, and eventually he confessed. Let us not inquire too closely into the methods by which the Beg and his minions persuaded Yakub to be frank with them. Suffice it to say that according to the old Chinese law still in force in Sinkiang no one can be convicted of any crime, no matter how strong the evidence against him may be, unless he confesses it; so that those responsible for the suppression of crime become experts in the fine art of eliciting confessions from recalcitrant prisoners. From the point of view of the British Consulate-General, all that mattered was that Yakub gave Mr. Chang and myself a detailed and even graphic account of how he did the deed, so that Chinese justice could take its course, the claims of Muhammad Shah's relatives in far Chitral be duly honoured and the bonds of amity between two great nations further strengthened through their local representatives. True, the said relatives of the deceased not only received no blood-money, as they would have done if he had waited till he reached his own country before getting himself murdered, but had to be content with a mere fraction of his estate—for the local people who had had so much trouble and anxiety over the matter, from the Beg down to the prisoner's (more or less) innocent wife, could not be expected to disgorge more than a reasonable percentage of the spoils. But then, Muhammad Shah had no business to indulge in opium-running in Chinese territory. With my concurrence, the Magistrate found Yakub guilty of murder and condemned him to death; six weeks later, when the necessary confirmation had been received from the Governor at Urumchi, the murderer was duly hanged in the presence of the British Aqsaqal of Yangi Hissar.

To return to our own journey. Soon after midday, when the trial was over, a cloth was laid on the Court table and the Magistrate and I seized our chop-sticks and set to work on a regular Yamen dinner of about twenty-five courses which

175 widely distributed and separated from each other by non-Mongol peoples. These Torguts were located in the Tienshan Range above the oasis of Karashahr, on the northern slopes of the Tienshan, and on the southern slopes of the Altai.

The Bato Setkhiltu League was composed of three banners of Khoshuts who lived on the Yulduz plateau in the heart of the central Tien Shan.

The Ching Setkhiltu League, which included three banners of Khoshuts and seven of Urianghai, was located in the Chuguchak-Altai area in northern Sinkiang.

The Chahars in the Borotala Valley, and the Oirat in the valleys of the Tekes and Kash rivers in the Ili region were not included in the leagues.

However, the Chahars and Urianghai are not true Western Mongols. The former were transplanted from Chahar by the Manchus after the conquest of Dzungaria in the eighteenth century; the latter are descendants of tribes who originally lived in what is now Tannu Tuva.

175 159 635 648 Through Yang Tseng-hsin's efforts, Sinkiang remained neutral in the civil war that raged in China in 1926-27. His troops kept out the forces of the "Christian General" Feng Yü-hsiang. On his own initiative, he negotiated a new treaty with the Soviet government permitting Soviet consulates to operate in Sinkiang even after the National Government broke off relations with Soviet Russia in 1927. With the establishment of the National Government at Nanking, Yang wired his acknowledgement of, and allegiance to, the new government, which confirmed his position as governor.

2. Governor Chin Shu-jen

175 159 635 [682] [660] Yang Tseng-hsin came from the southwestern province of Yunnan and during his rule many men from Yunnan had followed him to Sinkiang. In 1928, a fellow Yunnan official, allegedly with the connivance of the Chinese Communists and the Russians, murdered Yang at a banquet in his honor. The military commander Chin Shu-jen, who was believed to be implicated in the assassination plot, immediately suppressed the revolt and put the ringleaders to death. He then maneuvered himself into the position of governor.

Under Chin, the government of Sinkiang virtually disintegrated. Corruption was rife. Chin himself set the example for rapacity. He ruled in open defiance of the National Government at Nanking to the extent of concluding, on his own initiative and without the cognizance of Nanking, [648] a new agreement with Soviet Russia in 1931. The agreement permitted Soviet authorities to establish eight commercial agencies in Sinkiang and to have complete control over telegraph and radio communications, thus increasing Soviet influence in the province.

175 159 635 669 578 The deterioration of economic conditions, heightened by spiralling inflation and the exploitation by Chin's minions, oppression, and inequities, led to widespread discontent. The situation was ripe for

3:Cable & French M-5 (1926) 1927 AF13 Northwest China
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and priced, and the face towels selected, with a good deal of advice from the crowd, well-mannered bargaining began. Our basic offer was about half of the price written on the tag attached to the goods. The courteous merchant then smiled and indicated a notice hanging outside his shop: 'No prices discussed here,' to which the Greek chorus again echoed: 'He does not discuss the prices!' We affably acquiesced, but assured him that our money was insufficient for such an expensive outlay. With a wave of the hand, he met us half-way, saying: 'You are guests from a far country. Have a little more tea!' thus subtly indicating that the bargain was concluded. A chit was produced by one of the apprentices, and another began to rub down the ink on his slab, being careful in our presence to observe the Confucian dictum that when the 'Princely Man' rubs down his ink, no sound is ever heard. While he was thus occupied in preparing the materials necessary to write out the account, we rapidly noted the amount in pencil on paper, and waited to see if his tallied. 'Did you see that?' said a man at our elbow. 'You'll find that they are right, too Reading, writing and arithmetic are all quite easy to them!' We rose to leave, but as we did so we handed a packet of Christian books to the merchant, which he accepted with evident pleasure, then with sharp orders he dispersed the assistants and escorted us to our carriage.

Early one morning the landlord appeared at our door in a state of great agitation. A young woman, married to a relative of his, had poisoned herself with strychnine, and they urged us to go and make an attempt to save her life. 'Our own remedy,' he said, 'is mare's milk, and her husband is scouring the city to get some.' We were taken to the house where a young woman lay on